

# The Freethinking Christians' MAGAZINE.

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## REMARKS ON 1. PETER 1, 12.

Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the holy ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.— 1 Peter i. 12.

*To the Editor of the Freethinking Christians' Magazine.*

SIR,

NOTHING tends more to the elucidation of scripture, than ridding it of those ideas which ignorance of the proper meaning of words has attached to it. He who rescues any term from the hand of abuse, and applies it to its own use, does an eminent service to philosophy; and he who restores to its primitive meaning any portion of the sacred writings, is contributing to the cause of rational Christianity. To those who either dare not, or will not *think*, exercises of this kind must appear insipid, and troublesome; but by those who delight in the pursuit of knowledge, the most trifling attempt of this nature will not be despised.

The passage in question has long been viewed in a light that appears directly opposed to the apostle's intention.

Commentators generally explain it as referring to the exercise of an order of beings superior to man, of a purely spiritual nature. This opinion is founded on the meaning of the word *parakupsai*, which signifies, “to stoop to look into;” and it is supposed that the apostle in using it has a reference to the attitude of the cherubim that were placed on the mercy seat.

But this view of the passage appears incorrect on the following grounds. In the first place, it takes for granted, without any proof, that those two figures represented such an order of beings, and also represented them as looking into the writings of Moses and the prophets. But if this is the ground on which such an opinion rests, it might with equal propriety be contended that they represented Peter and John looking into the sepulchre on the morning of the resurrection; for it is said of them, when they arrived at the sepulchre, that (*parakupsas*) “looking down, they saw the linen cloaths lying by themselves,” &c. Luke xxiv. 12. John xx. 5.

In the second place, such a view of the passage is inconsistent with itself; for, from what is generally said respecting those supernatural beings, it would appear that they are placed above the necessity of looking into the writings of the old prophets, for information respecting the grace of God.

In the third place, there is no part of the New Testament, nor of the Old, that favours such a view of the subject. The only passages that have the smallest semblance of being parallel to it, are the following (Eph. iii, 10.), "To the intent that now unto the *principalities*, and *powers* in *heavenly places*, might be known, by the church, the manifold wisdom of God." But by the term "*epouraniois*," rendered "*heavenly places*," cannot be meant the places where those spiritual beings are supposed to dwell, neither can those beings be referred to in the words rendered *principalities* and *powers*; for, the *epouraniois*, "*heavenlies*," or heavenly places, were the scenes of apostolic action; and the *principalities* "and *powers*," were characters with whom they wrestled. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood (i. e. not only), but against *principalities* and *powers*, against the *rulers* of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (*en tois epouraniois*). Surely every one must perceive that this refers to the contention that existed between the Jewish priests and the apostles. The spiritual guides of that day violently opposed the apostles, because they published in their native simplicity those truths which it was the interest of the priests to involve in obscurity; even the *devout* and "*honourable women*" became active in the war waged against the apostles. With these did the Galilean fishermen struggle; they fought not with carnal weapons, but with the all conquering sword of *truth*; they fought, and conquered! Eph. vi. 12, Col. ii. 15. These are the only passages attempted to be brought forward in support of the above view of the passage in question, and it plainly appears that they have no manner of reference to it.

Peter is not then speaking of supernatural beings, but of *men*, of himself, and of his fellow apostles. This opinion is grounded on the following circumstance:—in the first place, he mentions that the salvation in which those rejoiced to whom he was writing had been the subject of ancient prophecy; that the prophets who had spoken of it, although *inspired*, did not fully comprehend their predictions; and that in consequence of this they studiously applied themselves to ascertain if possible of *whom* the spirit spoke, and to *what particular period of time* he referred. The result was, that they found they were depicting scenes not to be exhibited in their



day. It was revealed to them, or they learned by diligent enquiry, that not unto *themselves* but unto *us* they did minister the things, &c.

The apostles were the successors of the prophets, in declaring to the world the mercy of God. The prophets had laboured, and the apostles entered on their labours. *John* iv. 37. The period was now arrived to which the spirit who spoke by the prophets referred; and according to several of the old predictions, the apostles had been qualified to succeed the prophets by the supernatural gifts of the spirit. Thus to the apostles was committed the ministration of the mercy that had been the theme of the prophets; and they, as the prophets had done, *looked into*, diligently studied, these things, and published them to the world.

Secondly. The term "angels," (*Aggeloi*) properly signifies "*messengers*." In this sense it is always used in the sacred writings, and with the utmost propriety is applied to the apostles, who, as the successors of the prophets, were *sent* as the *messengers* of God to mankind. Thus Paul says to the Galatians (chap. iv. 14), "ye received me as an *angel* of God, even as Jesus Christ." What else can be meant here by the word *angel* (*Aggelon*), but messenger? They had received Paul as the *messenger* of God, even as Jesus Christ, the grand messenger of mercy to the world. Again, Paul, speaking of Jesus, says, (1 Tim. i. 16), that he was "*seen of angels*." (*Ophthi Aggelois*) *appeared to the messengers*. Does he here mean to inform Timothy that Jesus appeared to the supernatural beings inhabiting regions unknown to man? Of what avail was such information? In no way could it add to the certainty of the doctrine of the resurrection. He certainly refers to the various appearances that Jesus made to his disciples, after he rose from the dead. A sight of Jesus alive from the dead was an indispensable requisite to the apostleship. For this purpose it was that Jesus appeared to Paul. Acts xxvi. 16. "Rise and stand upon thy feet, for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister, and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee: delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, to whom now I *send* thee." By "the angels," then, are meant the apostles, or messengers, who published to the world the doctrines of Christianity.

In the third place, the words are descriptive of the exercise of the apostles, with regard to the writings of the prophets. Those writings were the subject of their study, as they had been before of the prophets. By looking into them they became able ministers of the new dispensation, and far excelled their predecessors the prophets. Their superiority in know-

consisted in this:—the prophets had but a faint view of the glory which they predicted; the apostles saw it in all its splendour. Like Abraham, the prophets rejoiced in the distant prospect; the apostles found themselves the objects of prophecy, and the principal actors in establishing that dispensation, the glory of which totally eclipsed that of the former. Doubtless it was to this Jesus referred when he said to his disciples: “Blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; for verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them, and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.” *Mat. xiii. 16, 17.*

To this it may perhaps be objected, that the apostles possessed the supernatural gifts of the spirit, and that the things which they spoke were immediately revealed to them. Such an objection however is entirely without foundation. For, although they do lay claim to supernatural influence, it is always in close connection with the writings of Moses and the prophets. The very design of the spirit being given to them, was to “*guide them into all the truth.*” This was indispensably necessary to qualify them for acting as the *messengers* of God, nor were they allowed to commence their extensive operations in this character till they had obtained it. But so soon as they were thus qualified, all their former prejudices, their dullness of understanding, and their aversion to the spiritual nature of the kingdom of God, began to remove. They were now guided into the meaning of those things that concerned Jesus, and the glory to which he was advanced; and as it was to be their employment to announce the glad tidings of mercy to mankind, to the study of these they bend their whole attention—with rapturous desire they explore the mystery that had been kept secret since the world began, that had been veiled from generations and ages. It was while they were employed in *searching into “the deep things of God,”* that they obtained the knowledge of those things which *eye had not seen nor ear heard, and which had not entered into the minds of any to conceive.* 1 Cor. ii. 10.

The spiritual gift possessed by the apostles, did in no way set aside the necessity of their studying the writings of the prophets; nay, they appear to have obtained all their knowledge in this way.\* We do not find them advancing a single position, that had not been taught in some form or other by the ancient prophets, though, till explained by the apostles, it was not understood. Had they done so, the Jews would

\* Timothy had received a gift of this kind; yet see Paul's advice to him, 1 Epist. chap. iv. 14.



have been justified in the charge which they brought against them, of teaching things contrary to Moses. But neither Jesus nor his apostles taught any new doctrine; they said, "*none other things* than those which Moses and the prophets did say should come:" the public discourses of Paul and the other apostles are so many comments on the writings of the prophets. They *reasoned* with the people out of the scriptures; they *disputed*, *opened*, and *alleged*, shewing that Jesus was *the anointed*. The history of Paul shews that he dived deeply into the writings of the prophets, and it was thus that he obtained such a knowledge of those writings, as enabled him to reason in the masterly manner which distinguishes his public speeches.

Even in those passages of Paul's writings where he is supposed to utter *prophecies*, as in 2 Thess. chap. ii. it is easy to see that the ground on which he rests his declarations was the prophecies that went before. Compare what he says here with 1 Tim. iv. 1, &c. All these things had been foretold by the ancient prophets, and were again declared by Paul, who perceived, by examination of the subject, that they were now beginning to be accomplished.

This view of the words is certainly calculated to check the spirit of enthusiasm, so widely cherished by religious professors of almost every description. The necessity of supernatural influence to understand the plainest and most interesting facts that ever were published to the world, is a sentiment in which almost all are agreed, although by some it is differently stated. The numberless bad consequences resulting from such a sentiment, shew the exceeding great absurdity of it.

How foolish and wicked it is to teach people, that the Almighty has given them faculties, capable of comprehending truths that must be made out by the most abstruse metaphysical reasoning, and at the same time affirm that those same powers are incapable of comprehending the simplest facts! There was, it must be allowed, much obscurity attending the things which the prophets spoke, but that obscurity is done away by the accomplishment of many of them, and by the clear light in which the apostles have placed the others. Not only have the apostles, "*looked into those things*," themselves, but they have drawn aside the veil that the world may see the glory of the doctrines of Christianity.

As for those who unblushingly denominate themselves the successors of the apostles and profess to be the messengers of God to men, let them not be offended if we presume to ask them what message they have which we have not ourselves, and should have had if they had never been born? Let such cha-

racters reflect on the extensive evil that results from their leading the people to believe, that, without their assistance, they cannot understand the doctrines of Christianity.

If the scriptures are of any use to one man, they are equally so to every man; and if it is necessary for one man to study the writings of the prophets and apostles, and to think for himself respecting them, the same thing becomes incumbent on all. In this case they who search the scriptures, and for themselves judge of their contents, are the closest imitators of the apostles, who not only acted thus themselves, but exhorted others to do so, and applauded those who were obedient.

Your's, &c.

August 21, 1812.

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#### ON RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES.

*To the Editor of the Freethinking Christians' Magazine.*

SIR,

YOU have many communications much more interesting than the present; yet I hope the insertion of this will not offend any of your readers, nor prevent their being favoured with more important matter.

In consequence of what has been produced from the pen of W. C. p. 309, of your Magazine, "On Religious Observances," I beg leave to call his attention again to that subject.

He acknowledges he has received information on the consistency of some General Baptists, who, acknowledging their obligation to the bread and wine ceremony, do not neglect that of washing feet. They consider it a duty enjoined by the same authority, and whatever my thoughts are respecting the supper, I acknowledge myself to be under equal obligation to observe the washing of feet.

Perhaps, W. C. will not acquit me of *short sightedness*, in not seeing that the practice is nowhere enjoined on me by Jesus. The question is, how am I to know this? The common answer, "that it was a duty enjoined on the first disciples of Christ, but does not remain obligatory on those in after ages," does not satisfy me. I believe, that Jesus gave them a command to wash one anothers' feet—now if he did, and enjoined upon them to teach others *all things* which he commanded them, must not washing of feet be *one* of those things which they were to teach? I then ask, were the apostles obedient to the command of their master? and being obedient



thereto, did they not teach others (of all nations), to wash one anothers' feet? Does not the evidence from the case alluded to by W. C. respecting widows (1 Tim. v. 10), corroborate the probability that the apostles obeyed their master, and taught Christians to observe this ceremony? Of their case he says, "likewise a poor widow, above three score years of age, may not be provided for by the church of God, unless she have washed the saints' feet," &c. Does it not appear from hence, that this practice of washing one anothers' feet had been in the church nearly forty years—that it had its *\* origin* in the command of Jesus—and was thought necessary by the apostle Paul, to form a complete Christian character?

From these considerations, I see some importance in the practice, and shall be obliged to W. C. if he will inform me by what authority Christians may now neglect a duty so established in the church of God. It may be said, that in the country, and state, of the first Christians, it was necessary for cleanliness and refreshment. Permit me to ask, is not cleanliness and refreshment necessary among Christians now, as well as then? If it be said, that the design of Jesus was to teach his first disciples humility, I ask, is not that as needful now as in their day? Or, if it appear, that the occasion be not so frequent, is there any just reason that this lesson of instruction be totally neglected? Will W. C. contend, that because he cannot do the greatest possible good to mankind, that therefore he need do none? Or that because a poor friend, who formerly received five pounds per annum from his society, to help to support him, can now do with one instead of five, that therefore he shall now receive none? Would this be deemed reasonable, and according to Christianity?

If washing one anothers' feet, *when occasion offers*, be not only a token of love and humility, but well suited to cherish and confirm those principles, why should Christians discard the practice, while they believe and acknowledge that Jesus, their Lord, commanded his disciples to observe it?

Mr. Editor, you know, I objected to the opinion of W. C. that the prayer of Jesus when extended on the cross, was for his "*real murderers*." If my objections were groundless, I am sorry the reply of W. C. has not at all removed them. My objections arose from these three considerations.

1st. That there were many attending at the crucifixion of Jesus, who were not his *real murderers*—who might join the general clamour; but knowing little or nothing about Jesus,

\* If washing the feet of *friends* did not originate with Jesus; or if it had been the custom for one to wash another, prior to his command; a reference to good authority in respect thereto will be esteemed a favour.

or the cause of his death, were therefore real objects of his compassion.

2dly. That his "*real murderers*," the envious, malicious priests, and Pontius Pilate, who knew no just cause of death, yet would have him crucified—who knowing that they put to death an innocent person, could not not be the persons whom Jesus *excused for their ignorance*.

3dly. That such characters do not appear to be fit objects of forgiveness, without sincere repentance; and seeing they could not have *such repentance*, while in the very act—I conclude they could not share in the forgiveness which was asked; and that they were not included in the prayer.

These ideas, I think, were clearly expressed in my questions; but it appears W. C. did not understand me, or he went off the premises, with a design to avoid the conclusion. He asks, "Is not God ready to bestow the riches of his favour on the vilest character who repents?" I answer, I believe he is; but what has this to do with the question? Have not the questions, as stated, implied the willingness of God to forgive the penitent; but does that prove that he forgives the impenitent? If it prove any thing, it is, I think, that he does not. This it is which strengthens my objections to his assertion. The malicious priests, and Pontius Pilate, could neither be said to repent, nor to have the ignorance upon which ground the forgiveness is asked, and therefore I think not included in the prayer.

If W. C. thinks that I conclude such characters could never after repent, be converted, and become the objects of the divine favour, I am right in supposing he has mistaken my meaning. This would be indeed to limit the mercy of God, and is very far from my thoughts of his sovereign goodness; but if God himself has made repentance indispensably necessary for such as murderers, in order to obtain forgiveness, why should W. C. suppose that I unwarrantably limit the sovereign goodness of God, merely because I press the necessity of such repentance? The limitation is such as God himself has fixed—is not an attempt to remove it unwarrantable?

I admit, with W. C. that different degrees of guilt must be imputed to the various characters concerned with the death of Jesus, if by death he means the murdering of him; but I conceive that some were present at his death, who were concerned in nailing him to the cross: and, to use the words of W. C. "were actively engaged in imbruing their hands with his blood," who were free from the crime of *murder*, being compelled to do what their office required; might act, without any *murderous intent* at all, and therefore could not be the "*real murderers*" of Jesus.



I would ask W. C. if he has not also in his arguments upon this subject gone from the idea of *forgiveness* to that of *mercy*? I am unable to defend a nice distinction in the use of words; but this I know, that if we make use of terms and phrases which we understand very differently, it is not likely that we shall meet in our judgment upon any subject. I conceive that the term *death* does not necessarily imply murder, though murder implies death; and that the term *mercy* may in many instances mean *forgiveness*, but not always—but that forgiveness must always imply mercy. If I am right in this, that there may be mercy when there is not forgiveness, then the case of the apostle mentioned by W. C. will confirm my opinion, in opposition to his assertion in respect to the prayer of Jesus. The mercy of the Lord was exercised towards him, while in his persecuting rage; but may we say Paul was *forgiven* before he repented of the crime? He says, indeed, he obtained mercy, because of his ignorance. Here I would ask, was the case of Paul similar to that of Pilate and the priests? Paul thought his zealous defence of the law was right, and that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth, being ignorant; but could the priests say so? Could Pilate, a judge and governor—who found no fault in Jesus, yet scourged him, and gave him up to be crucified, be innocent like the soldiers who acted under his authority? Could it be said of Pilate and the priests, “They know not what they do?”

Although the case and prayer of Stephen bears more likeness than that of Paul to the case of Jesus; yet when Stephen said, “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge,” are we not to understand, that in this prayer he requested only the same good which Paul experienced, (*viz.*) the long suffering mercy of the Lord? or, in other words, Stephen desired that no speedy evil should come upon them for their crime, but that God in mercy would bear with them. This is the sense in which I understand the words of Stephen. If the prayer of Jesus mean the same, and nothing more, I certainly did not understand it.

I do not “mean to affirm that such characters are not to be prayed for at all, or not until they actually repent;” but I do think we are not warranted to ask God to forgive them before they repent, and for this reason, because God has not promised to pardon but upon repentance. If, then, we take it for granted that God has revealed his will on this point, why should Jesus, or why should we, ask him to do that which we are informed and believe to be contrary to his sovereign will and appointment? I trust W. C. can perceive that it does not follow, that if Jesus did not request *forgiveness* for those who were unworthy of it, that he died with “malevolence in his heart towards

the instigators of his cruel death." I see no reason for such a conclusion.

It appears reasonable to conclude, that there were different characters at the crucifixion of Jesus; he either prayed for all present, or for some only. If his prayer was in behalf of every one present, and the *forgiveness* he requested means no more than the term *mercy* in some other places, then I confess my questions and objections have no just foundation; but if forgiveness means in the sense of *pardon* or *remission of sins*, then I still think that the "*real murderers*" of Jesus were not included in the prayer. I am your's, &c.

Cranbrook, August 8, 1812.

J. D.

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REPLY TO THE MISREPRESENTATIONS AND UNFOUNDED  
ASSERTIONS OF THE BRITISH REVIEWERS, RESPECTING  
THE FREETHINKING CHRISTIANS.

*To the Editor of the Freethinking Christians' Magazine.*

SIR,

**F**EELING a most ardent desire for the success of your monthly publication, but more particularly of your principles, which I consider to be in strict union with those taught by Jesus and his apostles, it is natural to expect that I should be particularly anxious in wishing to see corrected any false statements that may have gone abroad respecting either, to the great injury of the cause of uncorrupt Christianity. With this view it is that I attempt to correct a late severe and most unjust attack of the British Reviewers upon the Society of Freethinking Christians, in which they are represented not only as a debating club, but likewise as disbelievers in Christianity, and encouragers of blasphemy and impiety.

Such serious and monstrous charges as these, emanating from a respectable quarter, ought not to go unanswered or unnoticed; under this impression I offer myself to the notice of your readers, without any pretension to literary talents or classical erudition, considering that TRUTH is capable of triumphing in homely hands, though destitute of the polish of the school.

The connection of argument in which our society is introduced by the Reviewers is not a little singular. After having wrote copiously upon the Lancasterian and Belleyau systems of education, we are told that children ought to learn the Church Catechism, &c. with their Bible, to promote unity of faith, and prevent diversity of opinion, which is so injurious, as they say, to the well-being of society; likewise to prevent the spread of the



many dangerous and absurd doctrines now in existence, all professing to be drawn from the scriptures. Perhaps it did not occur to the recollection of the Reviewers, that many of these very men, whose opinions are so much to be dreaded, were brought up to the church; and, strange to tell, its infallible catechisms and creeds had not the desired effects upon their minds. Can the Reviewers ascertain whether this very knowledge, which is *so essential*, was or was not the foundation of their dissent.

Our founder and apostle, we are told, was a carpenter retired from trade! We are obliged to the Reviewers for the discovery, as the New Testament does not furnish us with the positive information; we are there informed, he was a carpenter's son, which is a presumptive proof, considering all circumstances, that he followed the like occupation with his father.

"Their fundamental principle is to abolish preaching, not being sanctioned by any command, precept, or example of Jesus." This is a fundamental mistake of the Reviewers, resulting from their ignorance of our principles, and the scriptural meaning of the word *PREACH*. Every attentive reader of the New Testament must clearly perceive, that Jesus does sanction it both by his own example and his commands to the apostles; but to them *only*, as they had no successors in office.

Here the question comes with full force, What was *their preaching*? I answer, that it was proclaiming (and is so rendered in the best translations), that which was before undiscovered being made known by the proclamation.—"Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." This proclaiming or preaching is very different from the numerous public and private discourses that Jesus and his apostles made upon various occasions. There being a most important distinction between the *teaching* and *preaching* of the New Testament, it may with great propriety be asked, what analogy has primitive preaching with modern practice? I answer, none at all; not even a shadow of resemblance, as a right understanding of the word clearly shews.

The preachers of these times have no *new* thing to make public; they have no *proclamation* to declare, as the gospel or *good news* has been known these 1800 years, and we are all as well acquainted with these facts as they possibly can be. What an absurdity would it appear were men to start up, and with a great deal of gravity and pomp declare that George the Third was King of England; yet the similarity is striking, for they would have quite as good an authority as priests of the 19th century possess, to proclaim the *NEWS* contained in the Testament, that Jesus was the Messiah.

The Reviewers, apparently without intending it, have stumbled on the truth in stating that we have agreed one

man's teaching, to the exclusion of the rest, is a principle violating the doctrines of Paul—"All teach one by one," &c. Do they here attempt to shew that we misunderstand Paul, or that he did not give any such directions? No; they saw they were on doubtful ground, and therefore artfully shifted the argument from Paul to "the whole tenor" (as they assert) of the gospel and example of Jesus. Christian reader, will you believe it? These *learned* Reviewers bring Jesus's Sermon on the Mount (so called) as a "standing precedent in all ages," in support of pulpit preaching.

An attentive perusal of the chapters called Jesus' Sermon, &c. will most clearly shew, that the precepts therein contained were delivered at different times, under different circumstances, and are related in an unconnected manner by another historian; consequently they can afford no sort of sanction for that injurious and antichristian practice which the Reviewers pretend to be such admirers of.

Jesus was not a stationary teacher of religion, neither was the Christian church formed until after his death and resurrection; consequently any argument drawn from his example, (for a moment allowing it to be such), upon this peculiar subject, will not have all the force which our opponents contend for.

The "general tenor of the scripture is in support of one man's teaching to the exclusion of the rest." This assertion of our opponents, and our denial, will amount to precisely the same. An entrance into the argument in this essay is foreign to my design; but suffice it to say, that if the British Reviewers will enter upon the subject argumentatively and scripturally, either in their own publication or in ours, we will pay every attention to them; and should they succeed in converting us, we will be equally as strenuous in support of our new opinions as we are now in defence of our present ones—truth, and nothing but truth, being our sole aim.

"These sectaries have converted their chapels into debating societies," &c. To the mere name I should have no objection, were the right ideas connected with it; but as they are not, it will be necessary briefly to state the nature of our society, leaving the reader to draw the comparison, and decide whether we are deserving of the appellation or not.

1st. We are an assembly of individuals, connected together upon the admission of one common principle—the belief and acknowledgment of the Messiahship and resurrection of Jesus, with the determination of squaring all the actions of our lives by the standard of Christianity—virtue and not sentiment being our bond of union.

2ndly. We are a regularly organized body, meeting together principally for the purpose of "exhorting one another,



admonishing one another, and building each other up in our most holy faith." We have church officers, such as elders, deacons, &c. for the purposes of "decency and order," agreeable to the primitive Christian plan.

3dly. We acknowledge no head in religious affairs but Jesus. We consider private judgment the inalienable right of man, and adopt the recommendations of our master in "judging for ourselves what is right."

With us the unity of the church and the equality of its members are first principles: and for the purposes of general advantage, those whose talents and virtues have made them the most capable are chosen for public speakers every three months, as are all the other officers of the church.

With the strongest disposition to make every allowance for the wrong conceptions and illiberality of our opponents, there is one assertion, which in justice to ourselves I cannot pass over, and which calls for the most satisfactory explanation.—"In fact, there is no species of **BLASPHEMY** and **IMPIETY** which is not there discussed and defended upon scriptural grounds." Surely the Reviewers could never state so monstrous a charge without possessing proofs of the strongest nature; and are they not guilty of the most gross injustice to us and the public in withholding it? I am at a loss to discover, in the multitude of subjects that have come under the public eye, even one, that, with the utmost latitude of expression, can deserve any such denomination; but this I know, that the exposure of vice and the establishment of virtue are the objects of our unceasing regard and exertions.

Besides the numerous doctrinal subjects that are examined at our place of worship, we have others of a more simple though not less important nature, such as the *best system of education*, in which that of parents performing it themselves is shewn to be far the most excellent, and attended with the greatest advantage to the morals of their children.

*Early virtue.*—Shewing its extreme importance, and that it carries with it its own reward in this life, and the best assurance of the favour of the Deity in a future state of existence.

*Friendship.*—Proving that it is attended with the most exalted enjoyments of our nature, and that none but virtuous men can be truly and really friends.

*Characters of Jesus, Moses, Paul, &c. &c.*—Their greatness and their exalted virtues set forth, as affording the strongest stimulus to our exertion and imitation. If this line of conduct towards the public is to be reprobated in the language of the British Reviewers, allow me to say, that "after the manner which they call blasphemy worship we the God of our fathers."

Having now gone through their animadversions on our Society, it will be necessary to attend to the quotations from the Magazine, and the manner in which they connect them with the body at large. It seems to have entirely escaped the notice of the Reviewers, the very wide difference that must necessarily exist between a Christian church, wherein all the members are agreed upon the fundamental principles, and act with union and consistency in the pursuit of the desired object, and a monthly magazine (issuing from such a society) devoted to the immortal cause of rational religion and free enquiry, and open to the enlightened of every party; consequently a great contrariety of opinion must be expected to be found therein: such has been the case upon points of the highest importance to man. We considered, as believers in Christianity, that, in order to do justice to our religion, it was not merely necessary to give insertion to the various opinions of its professors, but likewise to hear what its adversaries could say in opposition; some of whom we believed to be well meaning men, and possessed of eminent talents: we therefore gave a candid invitation to Deists, in our Prospectus, to come forward and state their arguments, in order that the believer and the unbeliever might meet upon equal ground, and there contest their differences, in which the force of argument, and not the argument of force (as has been often most unjustly and foolishly used against the latter class of men) should be the sole umpire in the controversy. The consequence of this line of conduct on the part of the conductors of the Magazine has been, that the Christians have come off triumphant, having truth on their side; and the Deists, one by one, are fast quitting the field, discomfited and disgraced, instead of exulting, as they have usually done, when engaged with weak and foolish men, calling themselves Christians, anxious to prove too much, and defend what never belonged to their professed system.

The quotations upon Prayer, Moses, and the Resurrection, are certainly correctly taken from our Magazine; but what do they prove? that they are our opinions—no; certainly not: for it so happens that they were all most satisfactorily and fully replied to by *Freethinking Christians*. Although the extracts are deficient of proof in this respect, they are quite ample enough in another; and that not the most creditable to *impartial* Reviewers, as they prove pretty strongly that they are most shamefully deficient in either industry or honesty, as a reference to the Index of the first volume would have directed them to the 433d page, in which they would have found a particular statement of our principles. But how absurd must it appear to every unbiassed mind, the selection of a few passages



from any publication that has the least pretensions to freedom of investigation, and then tell the world, without the least hesitation, that they are the real sentiments of the body with which the Magazine is connected! It savours strongly of intended misrepresentation on the part of the Reviewers, in giving their readers extracts from only one peculiar class of correspondents, without stating the general strain of the Magazine, or that those particular letters were replied to in the succeeding numbers.

Were a stranger to our principles to take the criterion of the British Reviewers, in order to ascertain them, he would find us to be the most singular set of beings he had ever heard of, discovering us in the same breath to be both Unitarians and Trinitarians; in one part the inveterate enemies of priests, in another their supporters; to-day the ridiculers of Methodism, to-morrow its defenders. And in the 204th page, first volume, he would find us in a most violent passion, bringing charges of illiberality and persecution against ourselves.

To me it appears most extraordinary that men can be so blinded as to suppose, that we *even doubt* the truth of Christianity; all who know us must be well aware, that it is our grand aim to establish it—that we have laboured night and day to fix its evidences upon a rock, that nothing can prevail against. Let the men that call in question our belief read the succession of essays upon the subject, in our Magazine, by *Christophilus*, and I think their scepticism will be removed, when they observe not only the sincerity of the author, but likewise his newly discovered mode of argument, displaying the greatest depth of thought, combined with a most correct judgment in arranging facts and effects, that all men, even Deists, must admit; and drawing from them the most incontrovertible proof that Christianity came from God.

The design of this letter being more to correct than animadvert upon the British Reviewers, I confidently look forward to the next part of their publication for an acknowledgment of their error, and a correction of their statement to the public. If they are honourable and upright men, I am sure I shall not be disappointed; if they are the reverse, it is of small consequence what they either speak or write.

Now, Mr. Editor, with your approbation, I beg leave to subscribe myself an admirer of the character of Moses—a practiser of private prayer, and

A FREETHINKING CHRISTIAN.

*London, August, 1812.*

ON THE DOCTRINE OF NECESSITY, AS DISTINGUISHED  
FROM THAT OF PREDESTINATION.

*To the Editor of the Freethinking Christians' Magazine.*

SIR,

**T**HERE are some subjects which, beyond others, are involved in difficulty and embarrassment: to this class belongs the topic on which I now enter. An attempt, therefore, to introduce into it clearness and precision of thinking, if not entitled to praise, merits, it will be allowed, a friendly reception; especially if it should appear, in the prosecution of our inquiry, that the subject is in itself very curious, and, at the same time highly interesting to mankind.

To Lord Bacon, it is very well known, the world is greatly indebted for many discoveries, and many solid accessions to its knowledge. The name of Bacon, however, is chiefly illustrious for his new and admirable method of philosophising. Before his time, a race of learned men had appeared, each in his turn launching a system of opinions, fitted at once to overturn and destroy the theory of his predecessor, and to be overturned and destroyed by the next in succession. And it was at that time the prevailing opinion with men of sense, that the human understanding was in fact doomed by Providence to be the sport and victim of every daring adventurer; the possession of truth being placed in reality beyond the reach of our faculties, and every effort for its attainment to be looked upon as a vain and idle speculation. Better things notwithstanding were reserved for us: the night is now past away; and our intellectual horizon is lighted up with the blaze of noon. The genius of inductive philosophy advances with a cautious, indeed, and slow, but determined step, towards the elevation of science, trampling under her feet the symbols of superstition, and bursting asunder the chains of despotism and ignorance.

It is by withdrawing the attention of the student from primary or metaphysical causes, and restricting it to the contemplation of facts alone—to the contemplation of mechanical or apparent causes, that the method of induction has been enabled to achieve of late years such amazing wonders. And if any improvement has taken place, during the present age, in the *philosophy of mind*, our success should be attributed wholly to the introduction of a similar method of inquiry. No advances indeed can ever be made in this department of knowledge, any more than in physical disquisitions, except by confining our attention rigidly to the examination of facts. As to efficient causes, we know nothing of them; we never



can know any thing. With regard to us, they are the dreams of a prolific imagination, the *ignis-fatuus* of the philosopher. Yet even the contemplation of facts can never substantially promote the ends of enquiry, unless it be admitted, that both in the moral and intellectual worlds, as well as in the material, a steadiness and regularity of operation do every where obtain.

The attribute of prescience is indissolubly connected in our minds with every notion of God. At the moment when the universe came fresh from its Creator's hands, every possible combination of the laws destined to govern it must have been immediately present to his mind. No incident in the lapse of time could in any case arise to disconcert the original plan; to baffle the superintendant spirit; or to create a pause or interruption in the continuous succession of causes and events. It is not possible to conceive, without divesting the Deity of Almighty power and unerring foresight, that any occurrence whatever can take place, either in the material or intellectual world, which was not at first distinctly perceived and intended.

It is this firm concatenation, this indissoluble series of causes and effects, which, flowing like a river deep and broad, constitutes the doctrine of necessity. Predestination, on the other hand, supposes an original purpose to depart, in a multitude of cases, from this beautiful and magnificent order.

This exposition of the doctrines, it will be admitted, I presume, is clear and ingenuous. Now to apply to it the rules of philosophising: and, in order to exclude as much as possible all difference of opinion, I will confine myself strictly to the present age; passing over in profound silence the reported wonders of antiquity.

The inquiry offers itself to our examination in the simplest form. Be it always remembered that we must confine ourselves to **FACTS**. All facts naturally range themselves under one or other of the two following heads.

First. Facts which obviously and allowedly result from established laws; or,

Secondly. Facts, the connexion of which with any stated and regular cause, appears to some doubtful and uncertain.

Of each of these in its order.

Under the first head, undoubtedly, we must comprehend all operations in the physical or material world, such as the known properties of fire, and air, and water—the revolutions of the year—the ebb and flow of the tides—and, in general, the force, and direction, and combination of all solid bodies. Let an old and crazy ship strike impetuously on the rocks in a fearful tempest, and I believe, in the judgment of a sober pilot, it would signify but little whether his cargo consisted

of saints or sinners. If I wish to be conveyed safely to a distant part of the earth, I will place myself in a strong vessel, navigated by skilful men ; and I will set out at a favourable time of the year ; this is all I can do : I entertain not the slightest expectation, that the laws of nature will be suspended on my account. The vast machine of the world continues to roll on ; and, every day, “ men and flies ” are crushed beneath its wheels.

And with regard to the second class of facts—I mean those facts the causes of which are less manifest and striking : I believe it would be difficult to point out even any one of these, which an attentive consideration of all the circumstances would not satisfy a candid mind of its immediate connexion with some natural and adequate cause. The argument, on the efficacy of which the advocates for predestination appear chiefly to rely, is drawn from the fact of the sudden conversion of certain individuals from one set of opinions to another.—How else can we explain, say they, a fact which every body allows ; namely, that a man shall preach for a whole hour to a crowded assembly, consisting perhaps of 500 people ; all so arranged as to hear distinctly every part of the discourse, and listening with the profoundest attention to every sentence of the sermon ; and yet, notwithstanding this agreement of circumstances, not more, out of so large a multitude, than one or two shall be converted ; that is, shall be persuaded to adopt the opinions of the preacher ? This case is confidently appealed to almost every day, as decisive and satisfactory.—Now, to an understanding like mine, accustomed, on all occasions, to look for *natural causes*, the instance in point involves no difficulty whatever—not even the colour or shadow of an exception to the general rule. And is it *indeed* a marvellous thing, that one man shall adopt the opinions of another ? Does any thing of this kind ever happen in private company, in courts of justice, or in the House of Commons ? And shall men change their views and sentiments in all these places, and yet remain perfectly invulnerable if the scene of discussion happens to be laid in a church or a meeting-house ! An accomplished orator, a man who is in complete possession of every avenue that leads to the understanding and to the heart, shall stand up before a numerous congregation, and declaim on the most important and rousing topics—scattering the lightning and the thunders of impassioned eloquence—now, unveiling to the sinner the “ sweet fields of Canaan,” and its “ gently-rolling waters”—and now disclosing to his view, in hideous prospect, death, hell, and the judgment to come ; and shaking the pale and trembling wretch over a sea of brimstone, whose waves of liquid fire undulate and dash



amid the infernal rocks ;—and yet, if our orator, with all these arts, with all these engines of persuasion, succeeds in alarming but a single transgressor, why truly his success must be referred immediately to the *special influence* of the divine spirit !

But it may be demanded, how comes it to pass then that *all* are not converted, if we exclude spiritual influence, since the same means are evidently employed with respect to all ? I reply ; precisely because men are differently constituted, and differently educated. And even the same man, we may observe, is, under different circumstances, quite a different being. A recent death in a family, a sudden reduction from wealth to poverty, or a severe illness, commonly affects greatly the individuals concerned, and disposes them to hearken with more seriousness to every thing which comes to them in the shape of advice or consolation.

But here perhaps I shall be reminded, that these occurrences are, in truth, among the very dispensations which a merciful Deity employs to improve the characters of the men in question.—Very good : this is all I contend for. This, in effect, however, is to acknowledge the doctrine of necessity ; for it is, virtually, to class the means and instruments of conversion with the settled train of occurrences, and to disavow the authority of predestination or spiritual agency.

Another fact supposed to militate against the doctrine of necessity, is the ordinary succession of our ideas. Persons who have not attended to this subject take it for granted, generally I believe, that this succession is, for the most part, irregular and fortuitous. If such persons, however, will take the trouble to examine with any degree of care the train and connexion of their own thoughts, they will soon find that the succession of their ideas is as much under the controul of physical laws, as any part of matter, even the most familiar to us. The phenomena of dreaming supplies no exception whatever to this representation of things. Dreams in reality are nothing but our sleeping thoughts ; diversified remarkably, no doubt, by circumstances peculiar to themselves ; but still, governed constantly and equally by the operation of **FIXED LAWS**.

I conclude, therefore, upon a view of the whole case, that if we apply to the doctrine of predestination the just rules of philosophising, it will appear incontrovertibly, that it is totally void of foundation ; and that the doctrine of necessity, as stated and explained in this article, is placed on a firm and immovable basis, and receives additional strength and evidence, in proportion to the accuracy and extensiveness of our research.

I am, Sir, &c.

Sept. 6, 1812.

ZETA.

## ON UNITY OF FAITH.

*To the Editor of the Freethinking Christians' Magazine.*

SIR,

**I**T has been sometimes urged, to the discouragement of those who would avail themselves of the greater liberality of the times, for attempting to dispel the clouds of superstition and prejudice, that still darken the minds of such numbers, that sad experience has shewn such attempts in discourses and writings to have been ineffectual; therefore the consequence of so many attempts should teach us that all plans of a reform in inward and outward religion, and all projects for uniting the minds of men, separated by creeds and opinions, are downright folly.

At such logic as this, however, we can only shrug up our shoulders. What is there futile or foolish in it? That perhaps a single man, or a few individuals (it is the same thing) have made attempts that have not succeeded? Who promised them success? How can any man, individually, have a call to be a reformer—a church-broom? That would indeed be folly, absolute folly, which must necessarily prove folly in the result. But, for reflecting, enlightened men, provided with the necessary talents, without destroying themselves and their abilities, wherever they can to raise the voice of reason, and frankly confess the truth—for every one, without laying claim to the personal honour of a reformer, to contribute what he has to the explosion of superstition, communicate his correcter perceptions, strew the seeds of truth (to the extent of what he has) and avail himself of a season of liberty as the boon of God—and then leaving it to his providence how, when, where, that seed shall shoot up, and yield beneficial fruits—is that likewise folly? Verily, if that is folly, then is the boon itself of God also folly.

Or shall we be silent and conceal our correcter perceptions, because it is impossible, abstractedly considered, to reduce mankind to a unity of faith in religion? It sounds plausible indeed when it is said, all men differ in their understandings; every one has his peculiar degree of ability, his own mode of mental representation, his own proportion of susceptibility to truth and error; consequently, so long as the world endures, differences of ideas, of judgment, and of opinion, will remain: consequently, religious union is nothing more than a delightful dream, a phantom that he alone can take for a reality, who is totally unacquainted with human nature, and confounds the actual with the possible world. Plausible it sounds: but hear what I have to say.



In the first place : does it then follow, that the good, which can produce no universal effect, is not good ? In the country of the Grisons, the people plough with huge heavy ploughs, to which they harness from four to six horses, and with them can do no more work, than our countrymen often do with only one. A certain nobleman, on his travels, had observed our method of ploughing, and was desirous to render his countrymen wiser, and save them much labour and expense. He ordered at his own cost implements of husbandry to be brought from England, began to plough with two horses, invited his neighbours to inspect his process, advised them to procure similar implements, and indulged the pleasing dream that he was already the happy improver of the agriculture of his nation. But behold, the people in general surveyed the novelty, shook their heads, and—continued in the old way. Some few, however, convinced of the easier method, and consulting their interest, adopted it, and found their account in it ; whereas the greater part adhered to the ancient practice.

What is your opinion, reader ? was the new method of ploughing not good, because it was not generally adopted ? Was the nobleman therefore a fool, for having divulged it, because he might have foreseen, that the whole nation would hardly form the same idea of the matter, judge alike of its value and advantages, learn to believe and to act alike ? Or, should you not rather say, that the endeavours of the man to disseminate better notions of the art of ploughing, were nevertheless good, useful, praiseworthy, notwithstanding they were not immediately attended with universal success ? And how, if after fifty or a hundred years, some should be found, who, following the example of a few, and by frequent experiments having discovered the value and advantages of the new method, shall have induced the multitude to adopt it and rendered the improvements general ?

Secondly : if it be said, the ideas of mankind will be different as long as the world stands, I ask to what topics is this properly applicable ? Not surely to all ; for, that there are certain ideas in which all men are agreed, will I hope not by any be denied. Where then does diversity of ideas exist, and where does it not exist ? It exists (1) with conceptions not obvious to the senses, and merely derived from argument ; for instance, if certain people call whatever can be perceived by the organs of sense, matter, and then discover certain effects which they cannot reconcile with the abstract conceptions of matter known to them, and thence infer a heterogeneous entity, which they call spirit ; it is very natural, that, touching the question, whether there are spirits, and what ideas we should form of their substance, mankind should think differ-

ently. Thus a diversity of ideas exists (2) with very complicated conceptions, which must be laboriously abstracted from several individuals, and where it depends on observation, on the comparison of the phenomena, on the acute consciousness of one's own apprehensions; for example, with the conception of liberty : (3) with such general notions, as are not immediately reducible to sensible perceptions, *ex. gr.* that an infinite series of causes and effects is a solecism in terms : (4) with the signs of ideas, &c.

Diversity on the other hand does not exist, or at least universal agreement of human ideas by instruction and information may be possible, (1) with sensible and daily occurring observations; for instance, that it is now day or night; that the light of the sun renders objects visible; that wood is wood, water water, &c. (2) With matters of experience frequently occurring, *ex. gr.* that cleanliness promotes health; that moderation in the fruition of what we enjoy, preserves its charms and our relish for it; that kindness and complaisance conciliate affection, &c. (3) With such general notions, as immediately flow from the apprehensions of sense, for example : that a part is less than the whole; that an effect must have a cause, &c. You therefore clearly perceive, that the proposition we have now been illustrating, touching the impossibility of an universal harmony of sentiment among mankind, admits of great limitation. How then does that conclusion look? "Consequently unity of belief in religion is a delightful dream—to labour at the realization whereof is folly."

In order to justify this consequence, it must first be inquired what religion is, and whether and how far it belongs to that class of things, wherewith no agreement of ideas is possible. And here some of my readers will bid me good by; for most people have been accustomed from their youth up, to understand by religion a collection of dogmas, the greater part whereof consist of very complex conceptions, and relate moreover to objects which cannot be understood by any apprehensions of sense, nor reduced to any sensible apprehensions; and for which, in addition to this, certain verbal signs and formularies are introduced, which, by reason of their ambiguity, indecision, and obscurity, admit of numberless modes of representation. And in this predicament it is indeed obvious, that unity of faith, that universal similarity of ideas in religion, as long as the world stands, will not be possible.

I, on the contrary, am persuaded, that religion, as the wisdom that is from above, must be an universal benefit, which all mankind, of every region under heaven, with every proportion of understanding, must be capable of knowing and of enjoying;



that consequently, in the compass of religion, there is not a single proposition which may not be immediately submitted to the senses; or at least not immediately be deduced from such sensible observations, as all men have hitherto made entirely in the same way: in short, I am convinced, that religion is nothing else than the direction to true felicity revealed by God, and discernible to all men through the light of reason.

Accordingly I comprise nothing in religion excepting what our Lord Jesus himself (as will be incontrovertibly seen in the sequel) has comprised in it, the doctrine of a wise and benevolent author of all things, who desires to be known to us as the universal parent of his creatures, and to be worshipped by a participation in his felicity, which consists in the endeavour to diffuse joy and satisfaction among our fellow-creatures. In such a system will naturally no other conceptions and propositions appear than those, whereof every man, as soon as he hears them, at least in the main, can and must form the same ideas, because and inasmuch as they all proceed from sensible observations, or may immediately be referred to them; as for example, the proposition, God loves his creatures; he intends only their happiness; to him we owe our existence and our continuance; whoever does good, and, like him, finds his delight in promoting to the utmost of his abilities the welfare of his fellow-men, renders himself agreeable to him, &c. And if that be religion—if that be Christianity—you will easily comprehend, my truth-seeking reader, that in religion unity of faith is certainly possible.

Indeed, if by Christianity you understand the formularies and dogmas of the sectarian religions, about which the teachers and priests of them have been for ages past quarrelling, and persecuting one another—and for the maintenance whereof hangmen have been employed, armies led into the field, and torrents of human blood been shed; then, I have nothing farther to allege against the proposition—that unity of the faith is a phantom of the brain; for on such dogmas mankind never can and will be agreed.

But, God be praised, a great part of our present Christians have already begun to adopt sounder notions of religion. There are already yeomen and peasants, who have understanding enough to perceive, that the decision of the questions—what we have to remark in Christ, besides his humility, besides his doctrines, virtues, and actions? whether we should conceive of the Deity under several persons? whether the sprinkling of an infant with water can create belief in facts of which it has no conception? whether the body of Jesus can be eaten entire and undivided in a thousand places at the same instant? &c. have not even the slightest influence upon the

happiness of mankind, upon their improvement and consolation; and, consequently, that they may be matters of speculation for the amusement of the learned, but have nothing at all to do with religion. And if only this one verity, that that alone is religion, which renders mankind wise and virtuous to happiness, and what therefore must be comprehensible, intelligible to all men, luminous to the most ordinary understanding; if, I say, this truth but penetrates throughout the world, and triumphs over the proflusions of unenlightened priests, it will shortly be found, that unity of faith in religion is possible and easy, to as great a degree as it has been hitherto held by many difficult and impossible.

Our Lord Jesus, at least, held such unity of faith in religion not only to be devoutly wished for, but even extremely possible; for he made it the principal object of his plan, as Paul (Ephes. ii. and iv.) explicitly attests; but, indeed, his notions of religion were totally different from those, which certain folks have taken into their heads, and now disdainfully sneer at this object. His first eyemark was so to simplify religion, that it contained nothing but truths, which the plainest common sense might comprehend. And after having preached a few years this simple, rational religion, he attacked the sectarian spirit, which had fostered the diversity of ideas in religion, and the disunion of the faith, in its strong holds. He rejected, as you will see to your astonishment, as we proceed, almost directly, all the former sources of knowledge, referred mankind to the only light from God—to sound reason—and named all his predecessors, who had amused and cheated the world with their pretended immediate revelations, thieves and murderers, for having robbed mankind of their jewel, truth, and killed the seeds of virtue in their breasts.

And I here, for the first time, openly and unreservedly own, that I hold the same superstition, which Jesus strove to eradicate from the world, the sole ground of the diversity of ideas in religion, and consequently of the rancour and dissension, and all the divisions that have ensued. For as soon as mankind allow themselves to be persuaded, that their own reflection, and the use of their own reason is not the safe road to truth; but that we must previously expect to be told by the priests what are truths, from pretended revelations, and how they interpret and expound those revelations; so soon inevitably spring up two unfailing sources of rancour and intolerance. The priests, as the sole judges and depositaries of the pretended revelation, now demand a certain pre-eminence over the rest of the human race, and with it a domination over the minds of men, which must bow submission to what they declare and presage, as the dictates of heaven; which irresist-



tably engenders pride and arrogance, and thence envy and jealousy among themselves, and of course raises parties in their peculiar circle, one pretending to possess the more genuine revelation of God, or to understand and explain it more properly than the other: they afterwards quarrel: then, in order to support themselves, canvas for adherents among the gentle and simple; or, as some call it, establish congregations, who persecute one another even to blood; and so render disunion in faith perpetual and unalterable. And this is presently attended with the second evil—the portion of thinking and enlightened men, perceiving the suppression of reason is determined on, are incensed against this crying enormity: devise means of escaping persecution, and assert the rights of humanity with the rights of reason: seize all opportunities which the laws of the land and tolerant rulers leave open to them—now by hints, now by grave remonstrances, now by scorn and derision, to dethrone the idols of the populace, and to render truth independent on the sacerdotal oracles.

Here then, reader, here lies the ground of the diversity of opinion in religion; not in religion itself; not in the human intellect.

Rational religion, as preached by Jesus, and as the sages before and after him preached it; (though before him none so pure and complete as he): the doctrine of God as the father (not the despot) of mankind: of providence: of a future state of existence: and of the true and everlasting happiness, to which the man arrives, if dignified by love, and in imitation of his Maker, he studies to find his sovereign bliss in the beatification of his fellow-men: this rational religion neither is nor ever has been the source of strife and discord; has caused no diversity of ideas; no controversies about faith and opinions; kindled no faggots; in this rational religion, all nations, in all the four quarters of the globe, may be of one faith and of one mind.

In sectarian religion alone, gushes and streams the source of disunion. And, since the ground-plots of all sectarian religions are pretended miracles and revelations, which arm the priest, disgust the philosopher, and perplex the populace; therefore, it becomes the duty, the heart-breaking duty of every honest man, who has ingenuity and talents for it, and who, *nota bene*, runs no risk by it of ruining himself and his agency for good, entirely to break down the wall of partition (Ephes. ii.) which Jesus began to demolish; that is, frankly and plainly to declare, that—all the superstitious and marvellous—rests upon sectarian faith—is delusion.

And this it is, my reader, which I intend now to make apparent to you, ere I introduce you farther into the history of

Jesus : that you may thus be enabled to contemplate that history yourself, in its proper point of view ; to find it rational and respectable ; to be enamoured of the character of Jesus ; to recognize in him the greatest and most venerable benefactor of the human race ; and to raise the superstructure of your faith above the reach of the disdain of the scorner, or the shafts of the sceptic.

Be not afraid lest this open avowal should be in any degree derogatory to Jesus Christ, or bring your sacred books into contempt. No ; the New Testament will, as it should, remain your manual, and retain that credit which it justly possesses, of being in a certain view the fair original of heavenly truths. Now, I will rather make its worth still much more obvious and manifest, by vindicating it against its misinterpretations, representing Paul, who appears to many a superficial reasoner, as a real sage, and even reconciling those, who have hitherto slighted the New Testament as an unprofitable book, to its excellent contents.

And thus shall our Lord Jesus not be disparaged, but rather defended against all who have undervalued his character, and incontrovertibly represented as the wisest, noblest, and most honourable of mankind. Only you must not believe that his true greatness rests upon a supernatural extraction, and on signs and wonders. You shall rather see in the sequel, what you might long since have remarked, that a man, who of himself, as man, transpierces the darkness of barbarism and vice, and is one of the wisest and most virtuous of men, possesses incomparably more real greatness, than such a one, who, as it were like a machine, is violently conducted and propelled through all the successive steps and passages of his life to his end by a divine energy.

That I and some others tell you openly and frankly all this—and that on the contrary so many of your parsons, of whose enlightened minds, recondite erudition, gifts, and acquirements, you are fully convinced, say nothing about it—ought by no means to surprize you, or excite your suspicion. That we speak, and they hold their tongues, is consistent in both. We both act by the same aphorism in morals : “ every one should, according to his conviction, do as much good in the world as he can do.” We both do what according to our conviction is good ; and we both do therein as much as we can. This *can* however is determined by a different principle, in which we likewise both agree. It is thus : if the practice of good in the world should bring thee into danger of disability for practising farther good, thou must immediately cease from it, till the danger is over : unless by the annihilation of thy agency, thou shouldest do the world a service, which would far outweigh that loss.”



Do you now perceive the difference, why we frankly declare our convictions, and they conceal by reservation a part of theirs? and how we nevertheless both act upon the same just and proper principles?

Your sagacious priests (I style them so in contradistinction to the great mass of ignorant careless, so sunk in mind and spirit as to be incapable of thinking for themselves upon religion, or lazy, holy, hirelings) mentally reserve many of their convictions, because in their situation they are in the most imminent danger of annihilating their whole agency for good, were they as openly to promulge them as we do: namely, they would raise their congregation like a hornet's nest about their ears, fall into the hands of their superiors, whose office it is to patronize superstition, and at last be silenced and deprived of their employment. Thus they would be prevented from all possibility of being farther active to the benefit of mankind; and this is obviously a case which renders reservation a duty. For the opportunity, which I have in the world to do good by my talents, and endowments is evidently of greater importance than the benefit that I procure the world by opposing a popular error; especially as, in the former case, I certainly promote the interests of mankind, whereas in the latter it is uncertain whether my frank contradiction will be adopted, and the world be really benefited by it.

With our Lord the case was entirely different. He saw with certainty, that his sacrifice would attain its object, defeat the prejudice of a temporal Messiah, and thus procure an opening into the hearts of men to saving truth. It was therefore greatness of soul, combined with wisdom, that determined him to venture his life upon it, and to sacrifice himself to the frank avowal of the truth.

Whereas your preachers can not only not foresee this consequence with certainty, but not even with probability—nay, they have reason to expect, that by a precipitate frankness, they will be incapacitated from being farther active for good. Who then can blame their reservation?\*

\* It is possible that some individuals of the priestly order may act from this principle: but we would just hint to the writer, that one reason which may induce these men to withhold their convictions is the fear lest their patrons and employers should *withhold their pay*. There is in Bishopsgate Street a tavern, to which a body of Christians resort once a year, to eat a dinner in support of the unity of the godhead: on the last occasion we are informed that a Clergyman of the church of England was observed performing divine service with his knife and fork, in full communion, at the table of heretics. This man, we understand, is fully convinced of the absurd doctrines of the national religion, and yet continues in the pale of the church, under the idea of being indispensable to the good of his flock, but can it be believed, even by charity itself, that a love of ease or of lucre has no influence in preventing him from declaring himself in an open and honourable manner!—*Editor*.

But we who are independent on the judgment of any congregation, on all charges brought against us by superstitious superiors, protected by the laws of the land, favoured by the liberty of the press, encouraged and summoned by a thousand friends to truth—you might complain of us if we resolved on taciturnity: you would justly call us dastards, or sluggards, or traitors to truth, if we, exempt from the peril of destroying our agency, merely for the sake of living at ease, or avoiding the scurrility of canting scribblers, or of gaining more by orthodox babble, or on account of our insignificant reputation, should, like such numbers of our ice-cold and selfish philosophers and theologues, betray the cause of truth, by withholding our convictions.

What I have now submitted to the reader, however, has nothing more in view than to settle his notions on certain points, hoping on the one side that the frankness with which I have delivered myself, and shall preserve in what future communications he may expect from me, will not be thought excessive; and on the other side, that from the taciturnity of our intelligent and sagacious clergy, no prejudice may be derived against them.

BARTIMÆUS.

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#### CLERICAL LIBERILITY.

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*To the Editor of the Freethinking Christians' Magazine.*

SIR,

A Gentleman of Hackney, who has been blind for several years, and who belongs to a respectable body of *Dissenters*, established at that place, was recently in want of a boy, to act as "a guide to his feet, and a light to his path," in his diurnal perambulations through the village. As he usually paid his little attendants liberally for their trouble, he was advised to apply to the master of the Gravel-pit Charity-School, which he accordingly did; and a boy was politely granted him for one day, with an injunction, that, if he wished to retain him longer in his service, he should procure the sanction of the *Rev. Doctor W—n*, Vicar of the Parish. To this the gentleman assented; but (whether owing to the privation of his visual organs, or to a deficiency of mental light, it may not be easy to determine) he did not foresee, that *difference of cast* would be considered as a bar to the success of his application. On the following day the gentleman waited on the *Reverend Doctor*, to solicit an extension of the grant; but, judge of his surprise when he was bluntly told, that "it was truly amazing



he should come *there* upon such a business," and as rudely asked, "were there no boys in his own connection?" Utterly confounded by the shock which this reception had given to his nerves, the gentleman had begun to grope his way from the holy threshold, when *his Reverence* added, "you can, indeed, keep the boy longer; if you have his consent; but he has a sister at the same school, and you may be assured that if you retain him, she shall likewise immediately quit, and may also go amongst the Dissenters!"

*Query.* Which was most in a want of a guide—the learned doctor or the applicant?

By giving the preceding a corner in any of your pages, you will much oblige a constant reader and well-wisher,

*Mare Street, Hackney.*

C. B.

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# REVIEW OF THE CONTROVERSY ON THE EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY IN THE FREETHINKING CHRISTIANS' MAGAZINE.

*To the Editor of the Freethinking Christians' Magazine.*

SIR,

**S**ELDOM has the question of the Truth of Christianity undergone a more ample discussion than in your invaluable Magazine, and perhaps no publication, avowedly Christian, has ever before afforded so fair an opportunity to the disputants on both sides, to defend their respective systems. You, Sir, have set an honourable example of free enquiry, by presenting to the world, in the same pages, an exhibition of talent and argument exerted for and against the Christian religion; convinced that if that system be true, the permission of its enemies to examine or oppose it, is, in reality, as beneficial to the cause, as the attempts of its friends to support it by law and violence have proved injurious.

These reflections have suggested themselves to my mind, on going through the whole of the controversy as it has appeared in your Magazine; and, with your permission, I purpose presenting your readers with a review of the argument, claiming the privilege of offering occasional strictures on the writers who have taken the leading part in the discussion.

The foremost of this description in favour of Christianity is your correspondent Christophilus. This writer commences his operations by throwing off all the cumbersome dogmas and absurdities of orthodoxy—thus, by making the religion of Jesus a *reasonable service*, he does away at once with that fund for wit and ridicule, which the general representations of Christianity have afforded to the sceptic. The fault with the advo-

cates of revelation has usually been, that they have had too much to defend; not so with Christophilus—he undertakes to support nothing but Christianity, pure and simple as its great teacher left it; and in the spirit of this system he considers there is nothing to which the Deist can object; “for (says he, page 182, vol. i.) it is in fact pure Deism, with such advantages as Deism, without revelation, never can possess; for what is Christianity but the religion of nature, simplified and elucidated so as to meet and suit the circumstances and ability of the meanest capacity, and rendered truly valuable by furnishing a clue and evidence for the belief of a future state of existence?”

Mr. Paine expresses his religious belief in the following terms—“I believe in one God, and no more; and I hope for happiness beyond this life. I believe in the equality of man; and I believe that religious duties consist in doing justice, loving mercy, and endeavouring to make our fellow-creatures happy.” Now to this creed Christophilus can add AMEN; so that the Christian can unite with the Deist in the general principles of religion—both equally believing in the existence of one God, in his justice and goodness, in the necessity of virtue and morality to the happiness of man, and in a state of bliss beyond the grave. On the latter article, it is true, Deists are divided among themselves; but of those who do not believe in a future state of existence, it may be said, at least they would wish for some condition of enjoyment beyond the short compass of human life, though they consider futurity to be involved in doubt and obscurity. And here the language of one of your Deistical correspondents may be quoted to the point—“I wish, Mr. Editor, in common with my brethren of mankind, to learn our future destiny; but *this wish—this ardent desire*—in the view of enlightened reason, constitutes no proof that I ever shall.”

The Christian and the Deist agreeing then in the general principles of religion, the point at issue between them is simply this—has the Deity ever revealed to his creature man these principles of religion, in any other way than is supposed to be conveyed by his works, and in what we behold of the ordinary operations of nature? The affirmative of this is taken by the Christians; and to prove that the Deity did reveal in an extraordinary manner these principles of religion, which it is acknowledged it is important for man to know, certain ancient records are put in as evidence, consisting principally of history, poetry, and epistles—these records have been collected together into a book known by the name of the Bible—in this miscellaneous work is to be found the history of a people, to whom it is assumed the Deity revealed himself—their origin,



customs, manners, policy, virtues, vices, and ignorance, are detailed in a manner totally different from the spirit of imposture—their poetry and songs, which exhibit some of the finest specimens of composition, have all a reference to a supposed divine communication—and the original letters, written by different persons, are replete with the soundest maxims of morality, avowedly derived from the source of revelation, contain evident allusions to and arguments concerning this revelation; and it appears that the writers of these letters endured privation, hardships, and even death, in support of some of the most material facts connected with this revelation. But in the regular course of human affairs, it has happened that this book has become corrupted, partly by design, and partly from the ignorance of translators; and the difficulty of conveying the spirit of a dead language into a living one—an ill acquaintance with the figures of speech, and the characteristic phraseology used by the oriental writers—a blind and senseless veneration toward these writings, in supposing them to have been dictated by supernatural power—the carelessness and ignorance of the majority of readers of works of this description—together with a variety of other causes which might be enumerated, have made it appear to the Deist, that these records have in them so much that is puerile, ridiculous, and inconsistent with the character of God, that they reject their evidence altogether.

In such a mass of matter as this book presents, viewed as it generally is through so-wrong a medium, and existing under such disadvantageous circumstances, it is not surprising that a variety of difficulties should be raised, and objections started against it; and, to answer all the objections which the ingenuity and ignorance of man have framed, would require a term of life much longer than is usually allotted to mortals. Christophilus had observed this, and wishing to do some good before he left this world, has adopted a different method in discussing the evidences of revealed religion: accordingly he has brushed away all the forcible and all the weak objections at once—all the argument and all the quibbling against this book—and on a very simple principle of reasoning attempts to prove the truth of revealed religion, without assuming the truth of the *book*—whilst the credibility of the *book* at the same time follows as a consequence.

The argument may be termed philosophical—facts are adduced, the existence of which is acknowledged on all hands; for these facts adequate causes are required, to account for their existence, on the principle of every effect requiring a cause, and of not adducing more causes than are necessary to the production of the effect; and the object of Christophilus is to shew, that for these acknowledged facts and effects, no other

causes can be assigned but such as imply the truth of revelation; accordingly he calls upon the Deist either to admit the truth of revelation, or to produce any better cause for the given effects. Than this mode of managing the controversy, nothing can be more simple, nothing more fair. I come into my kitchen, which is extremely hot—I observe in it a large fire, and immediately say the heat is occasioned by the fire—"No!" (says the kitchen maid), it is not the fire, indeed, Sir, that makes the place so hot!"—"Well, Molly, what is it then?" would be the natural question; and if Molly could not tell, I, who had always observed that fire produced heat, and had often felt that a good fire in winter made my study warm, should still be disposed to think Molly's fire the real cause of the heat, at least till she assigned some better one!

Plain and natural as is this process of the mind in forming its opinions, yet a correspondent (A. B. vol. ii. page 217) has thought fit to object to it, and on this circumstance the friend to revealed religion may perhaps congratulate himself. He will suspect that A. B. knew well the irresistible application of the principle, if it was once admitted, and therefore thought it advisable to shake it in the very commencement of the discussion; but be assured, A. B., the principle remains unshaken: and if thou wert to unite thy logic to the tongue of my Molly, I should remain unconvinced of my mistake. I might take an extra pinch of snuff to be sure, or the scullion might pin a dish-clout to the tail of thy coat, for shewing so much learning in the kitchen.

A. B. beats about this principle on which Christophilus conducts the argument with a good deal of *debonair*. He talks of our "finite knowledge, the short-sightedness of our nature, the properties of matter," and so on: but A. B. need not be alarmed; Christophilus does not pretend to prove his point to mathematical demonstration; he does not suppose that his principle is infallible, but he thinks it the best that fallible men can adopt. Christophilus may possibly be mistaken in some of the causes he assigns to effects; he only means to say, that when such and such causes appear the most suitable, the most appropriate, the most commensurate to the effects, he must consider them the *real causes* of such effects, till you find others more suitable, more appropriate, and more commensurate.

The first paper of the evidences of revealed religion is occupied in noticing a variety of observations by the author of the Age of Reason, in defining what Christianity is, stating the merits of the question, and laying down the principles on which the writer intended to discuss it. The second exhibits a very masterly treatise on the various books which compose the

Bible, and the light in which they are to be regarded. Nothing can be better calculated to silence all the little captious objections which have been brought against the scriptures, than the view which Christophilus takes of the subject.

In one sentence of this paper, I presume, with deference, to differ from the writer. After stating, that it is a point of little consequence whether the book of Genesis was written by Moses or not, whether traditionary or not, he observes, "I must contend, that whether Genesis was written by Moses or any other person, or however the account may have been confused or added to, that the probability is strongly on the side that these important truths were revealed to the writer by the Deity, in a way suited to the apprehension of the people for whom they were written." Now for myself I am disposed to think that no revelation took place in the mind of the writer, because I cannot conceive any *necessity* for such revelation, the Jews having believed the important truths contained in this book (Genesis) long before it was written; so that the book itself is not to be considered a *revelation* of these 'important truths,' but a *declaration* of them, and a history of the way in which they *had been* revealed to mankind. From inattention to this distinction may difficulties arise, and this has perhaps given occasion to the quibbling on this paragraph in the 'Evidences' by a writer whose signature is M. W. C. (vol. i. page 493) and who was taken to task by "an Observer," p. 578.

The first fact which Christophilus adduces is, that the Jews were the only nation of antiquity who believed in the existence of but one God—though in introducing the argument he appears to me to carry one point of objection against the Deist rather too far; and I mention all the defective parts of the argument, because I consider the principle which Christophilus has adopted in his Evidences to be of the most conclusive kind, and his papers on the whole to exhibit a masterpiece of reasoning. Christophilus considers the ground on which the Deist attempts to prove the existence of one great first cause to be vague and uncertain without revelation, and states that were he an Atheist, though he would admit that every effect must have a cause, yet he would deny the Deist's conclusion that there was *only one* first cause in creation. "It is true (says he) I see a house, and determine there must have been a builder; I see two or more houses, and there may have been as many builders. Carry on this reasoning—that I behold a world, and there must have been a God to create it; but there are many worlds, and each world may have had an individual first cause, from any thing I can gather from the book of nature, or from this mode of reasoning without revealed religion." Now I candidly confess that I think the argument of the Deist perfectly



conclusive without revealed religion ; and I think so on the principle of philosophising, which is the principle on which Christophilus conducts his argument : for in the instance of the innumerable worlds, we behold *one cause* is sufficient to account for their existence, and it is therefore unnecessary and unphilosophical to multiply causes. I am persuaded that without revelation this truth never could have been discovered ; but, when discovered, it seems to be unsettling the principles of reasoning too much to say it cannot be proved ; in fact, if this be admitted, it would invalidate all the powerful reasoning of Christophilus ; for he declares at the outset that he means “ to demonstrate the truth of revealed religion,” on the very ground that a Deist reasons with an Atheist to prove the existence of a God.

On the fact of the Jews being the only nation of antiquity which believed in one God, Christophilus deservedly lays considerable stress ; but to defeat the conclusion which would necessarily follow from this circumstance, a writer of no mean talent, and who has cut a considerable figure in the general question concerning revealed religion, has had the hardihood to deny the fact altogether. This writer contrived to conjure up, with the magic stroke of his pen, whole nations who were worshippers of the one supreme God—the ancient nations of the North, the Scandinavians, the Icelanders, the Scythians, the Greeks before the time of Cecrops, that is, before they were in any degree civilized or removed from barbarism, were all pure theists in the creative imagination of “ a Deist ;” and but for the industry of a correspondent (J. D.) this imposition might have been palmed on the unsuspecting and uninformed reader. But “ J. D.” has followed “ a Deist” to his source, and has brought his turgid accounts into deserved contempt, though supported by “ *unquestionable authority.*” After this, I suspect we shall hear no more of “ a Deist ;” if he is prudent, he will take no notice of the two letters of J. D.

The fact then of the Jews having been the only nation of antiquity who possessed this great and enlightened truth—a knowledge of the existence of one great first cause of all things—is but more firmly established by the opposition of “ a Deist.” For this fact Christophilus asks a cause—he shews, that if it could be possible to adduce this truth from nature, it would require the greatest exertions of philosophy, the greatest enlightenment of science ; whereas the Jews, when first they possessed this truth, were a mere wandering tribe, an untutored people. Now as the most refined and polished nations never attained to this truth—as those who pushed their inquiries the farthest into the secrets of nature, never possessed any clear and distinct notions concerning it, the presumption is, that the truth was not discoverable, at least in the then state of scien-

tific information; but the circumstance of an unenlightened people soaring to this sublime truth remains unexplained, and Christophilus, in searching a cause for this phenomenon in the history of the human mind, concludes that the Deity must have revealed himself to these people, as they themselves avow. And be it remembered, that there is nothing unreasonable in the simple idea of the Deity revealing himself to man—the Deist contending that he does so reveal himself in his works; the only difference of opinion being as to the *manner* of this revelation—they contending that it is done in a manner so unintelligible, that whole nations have passed away from the earth without understanding any thing about it—we, that it was made known in a plain and positive way, suited to the knowledge and condition of mankind.

Christophilus having assigned for the fact in dispute—a cause which appears to him the most simple, natural, and sufficient—calls upon the Deist to produce any cause for the effect, possessing these qualities in a more eminent degree—for this purpose a writer has appeared. A. B. of whom notice has already been taken, now naturally arrests our attention. This gentleman appears not at all to like the plan of the argument which Christophilus adopts in vol. ii. page 255. He asks whether it follows, that because this great truth was first entertained by the Jews, “that there is something super-human in it?” Not necessarily so from this mere circumstance, and if A. B. can discover any better causes for the effect than those which he calls super-human, the matter is at an end.

He goes on, “when it was ascertained that the earth was not the centre of the solar system, was it required that other men should independently make the same discovery, in order to prove that the philosopher was not divinely inspired?” Certainly not; and for this simple reason, because adequate causes can be assigned for the discovery, independent of inspiration.

At last, A. B. sets off in search of a cause for the specified effect; and he certainly takes a safe road, making a thousand conjectures, and asserting nothing: and if any one were to follow him in all his turnings and windings, and shew the absurdity of every one of his suppositions, it would be impossible to approximate to decision; for A. B. would strike out some new path, and wander on as eccentric, as erratic as before—so that till this writer fixes on some point which he means to defend, he is no fit opponent to Christophilus: and this may be the reason why he has remained unnoticed by him.

To account for the fact in question, A. B. (page 256) sets out by supposing, that Moses was a man of considerable penetration, and of a bold and enterprising character; that he might have possessed a benevolent and patriotic breast, or have

been actuated by ambitious motives ; that his inquisitive mind might have led him to reflect on the absurdity of all the religious systems of his time ; and, contemplating the emancipation of his brethren from slavery, it would be politic in him to inspire them with religious enthusiasm, in favour of that God whose immediate agent he pretended to be ; and that though there might be considerable difficulties opposed to all this, yet every thing would “ yield to the artful projects, the wily schemes, of a subtle and designing character.”

It is really astonishing to see what absurdities some men will believe, who affect to be sceptical. This writer cannot believe that the Deity would reveal himself to his creatures, but he can believe that a base and designing character could discover this great truth — could contrive to impress on the minds of an ignorant multitude what enlightened philosophy could never understand — that a great and aspiring soul could find the gratification of its ambition in heading a hoard of degraded slaves ; that a crafty hypocrite could expose hypocrisy, unmask deception, overthrow oppression, and bless a people with wise and enlightened laws against the very bias of their dispositions. I smile when I observe a writer of talent like A. B. twisting and struggling through a long chain of ridiculous suppositions, merely to get rid of a plain and easy hypothesis. The way before A. B. is straight and clean, and sooner then take it, he will plunge through mud and filth up to his hips ; the path round the mountain is easy of ascent, and he prefers to scramble through bushes and brambles up its shaggy sides ! Go on, A. B ; but we will not follow thee !

I would just suggest to this writer, that if he understands any thing of the laws of internal evidence, and will but examine the history of the Jews, he will find that the notion of one God must be dated back far beyond the days of Moses. But, however, it is for the reader to judge between Christopherus and A. B., and to determine which has assigned the most appropriate and simple cause, or causes, for the fact in dispute.

In my next, Mr. Editor, I shall conclude, subscribing myself, for the present,

THE REVIEWER.



*To the Editor of the Freethinking Christians' Magazine.*

SIR,

I Have neither opportunity nor inclination to enter into a controversy with Mr. Moor, respecting the rules and practices of the Methodist Societies; but called upon by him (page 346, in reply to mine inserted in your Magazine for June last), I send you the following :—

From what has subsequently appeared from your correspondent, I am now ready to admit with him that his former remarks are preliminary, but he seems hurt at the appellation I gave to them, and suggests from his language a desire that I should give them another reading; this I have not done, being from home, but from the recollection I have it is still an opinion with me, that his remarks introducing caudle, fat bacon, old nurses," &c. are vulgar and ridiculous, and nowise bearing upon the point he wished to establish.

Follies exist among most men, and Methodists have their share, I will allow; but the rules or laws of a body of men are not made foolish by the folly of an individual member, neither are such laws directly reponsible.

I am willing to confess, Mr. Moor's letter has convinced me, that what I have said concerning the conduct of the Methodists towards Mr. Moor, is too liberal, nay even false; for it appears he has "fallen among thieves," and the motives of a thief towards him he robs cannot be those of friendship.

Mr. Moor, by relating two or three instances of knavery, has not proved that the rules of the Methodist societies make men knaves: most questions have two sides. Upon admitting the above not to be the case, will it be presumption in me to say that Mr. Moor is forming a conclusion upon the blackest? With equal justice might I take the opposite, and infer, that because I have experienced several instances of kindness and generosity from members of that society, their rules and practices are calculated, unexceptionably, to make men benevolent and good.

Mr. Moor, in his letter, contained in page 404-5, probably thinks he has contrasted and exposed the inconsistency of the Rules of the Methodist Societies with scripture; it may be so—and had he rightly performed this, he would have done well. But still it is not clear to me that he has yet proved that "numbers who attend to them must perish for want of food."

What Mr. Moor's thoughts may be, of what I once was or now am, matters not; yet still I am obliged to him for the compliment of saying I am become wiser (or words to that effect). I

admire the openness and frank manner in which Mr. Moor writes, but think that argument would do more justice to his cause than low scurrility, and weak attempts at satire.

Mr. M. is more entitled to my thanks for telling me what he is *not*, than for relating what he is. Merely to assert that he is a *man* (which I never doubted) conveys no proof whether he is a wise man or a foolish man, a good man or a bad man; that he is a man, who thinks for himself, I from the first conjectured, and am happy to see it confirmed in his own words.

I conclude by most respectfully reminding Mr. Moor that there are thousands who can put in quite as strong a claim as himself to being MEN, but there are hardly so many that can roundly assert they are *virtuous* men!

*Oxford, Sept. 1812,*

JAMES GRIFFEE.

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#### ADVICE TO A YOUNG MAN ON ENTERING INTO BUSINESS.

*To the Editor of the Freethinking Christians' Magazine.*

SIR,

**S**HOULD the following extract of a letter, which has come into my hands, being *Advice to a Young Man on entering into Business*, be adjudged worthy your publication, it may afford some salutary hints to your young friends, and will oblige

A CONSTANT READER.

“ I congratulate you on entering into business, and wish you all possible success; yet I cannot forbear offering a few remarks, by way of admonition, under the persuasion that it will be most cordially received by one, whose advice, when in similar circumstances, I should heartily welcome.

“ You are now beginning the world as a Tradesman; there appears to me something unpleasant to an independent mind, in the very idea of trade, and particularly in its present overgrown state. Trade has now assumed a factitious shape, and calls for factitious means to support it. To an ingenuous spirit, then, it will be considered, at best, as a necessary evil; but it is not to my present purpose to treat on the principles of trade, but rather to trace its effects on the human character.

“ Trade must be considered as the mean to raise the party engaged in it above dependence, and to insure the comforts and pleasures of life: when it is entered into with this view, and carried on by fair and honourable means, it is laudable; when that end is gained, it becomes superfluous, and should cease when the cause for its existence has ceased. But how opposite to these remarks is the conduct of men in trade! Look

at your tradesman! He is just beginning business, without friends, and almost without capital; the small sum he has, is, perhaps, the niggardly savings of many a hard day's work, and many an empty belly—notice his fear, his anxiety, when he embarks his little all. How reasonable are his wishes, how limited his desires!—He only wants sufficient to secure him from want. This first desire is accomplished; his trade is in a prosperous state; he now aims to become respectable. Success crowds in upon him on every side; he is respectable, but he wishes to be wealthy; he applies with double alacrity; every thing is made subservient to his great end. His religion, his morality, his politics, are secondary to his favourite purpose. Mark his politeness to his customers! How he flatters the rich, and cringes to the opulent! But he is now wealthy; though malice does say, that he has been mean, hard, nay, unjust in his dealings—but he is still wealthy, and, you would suppose, contented—Oh, not so, indeed! quite as far from it as when his first humble wish was realized. Well, he goes on extending his trade—trade is with him the axis round which the whole circle of society revolves. Thousands may groan under a galling and oppressive government; he is deaf to the cries of the wretched, and complaints of the poor, while trade flourishes—armies may rot in pestilential countries, kingdoms be humbled by an all-conquering foe, or nations remain lost in superstition, and inflated with ignorance, since trade still goes on well. The whole Indies may feel the iron rod of European oppression; the slave may clank his chains to the passing wind, and mutter his sorrows to the burning sun—he can justify the whole with, “Ah! well, it makes good for trade!” But, behold! old age creeping fast upon him—he has grown purblind in casting and balancing accounts. I have just heard, that whilst hobbling to his desk on crutches he stumbled, broke a blood vessel, and gave up life and business together:—he is to be followed to the grave by his clerks and assistants—his remains are to be interred in his large iron chest, instead of a tombstone—his ledger is to be placed at his head, which it is expected will outlive his memory.

“Various are the views and intentions of men in trade, and as far as trade is prosecuted with an eye to any solid pleasure or permanent good it is to be approved; but, how often is it made the source of riches and power? How often does it beget covetousness, and create an avaricious appetite, which is ever craving and never satisfied? When this is the case, the very end of trade is defeated—instead of being the cause of happiness, it is the cause of misery—instead of bringing content it brings dissatisfaction—instead of lifting the trader



above want, it gives existence to endless wants, before unknown to him.

You are, I trust, equally aware of the chances and misfortunes of trade, of the difficulties you have to encounter, the perplexing circumstances in which you may be involved, and the frequent opportunities that must occur for the exercise of patience, fortitude, and all the Christian's virtues. Armed as you are with the strong principles of reason and religion, you will be better able to contend with difficulties than many; yet I know and would warn you of it, that unless your actions spring from the most exalted motives, there are situations that may warp the most inflexible principles, and stagger the most steadfast virtue.

In fact, as a tradesman, you have to war against two powerful enemies—*success* and *misfortune*, both equally dangerous to your peace; consider them as opposed to you on either side, calling for all your skill in combat. Recollect, that while you are engaged with one the other is gaining upon you; while you are crushing the foe on your left he on your right may cleave you to the earth. Do not then oppose yourself too long or too eagerly against either singly; but rather aim, by dexterity and perseverance, to parry off the weapons of both; and if, as I hope, you should beat down *misfortune* with the sword of self-love—never fail to hold the shield of justice, to catch the deadly strokes of *success*.

You will also be careful how you form acquaintances or friendships with men in trade—do not mingle in their company any farther than necessity requires; as stepping-stones, they may be useful to carry you through the mud; but if you take those things in the hand, which should be kept under the feet, be assured your fingers will not be perfectly clean.

Above all, do not sacrifice the whole of your time to business—ever remember that trade is but a mean to an end—it is intended to promote happiness; and pure happiness is of the intellectual kind. If then your time is entirely engrossed by trade, you lose every opportunity of cultivating the mental pleasures. I know how many of our tradesmen deceive themselves in this respect they think; that by pursuing trade with closeness and avidity, they shall secure more quickly an independence, and afterwards enjoy in retirement settled happiness; but they have gained a fortune and lost the power of enjoying it—by an unremitting application to business they have blunted the fine feelings of the mind, choked up the springs of intellectual bliss, and turned the streams of mental happiness through the thick wilderness of the world, where they were soon lost amid its endless mazes. With such men we have often found that leisure becomes irksome, and they fly to business again as the only pastime they are capable of.

"But you, J——s, will not be thus deceived; trust not to futurity, or you trust to uncertainty—improve the present hour; suffer not a day to pass without devoting a small portion to your own improvement; ever keep your mind in moral exercise; or, like iron, however highly polished, if laid by too long, it will rust. Remember that you have a greater, a higher character to sustain than that of a tradesman!

"I have dwelt longer on this subject because it deserves it—I have been serious, because I think when a young man commences business he enters into a new and important era—I have used freedom, because I know it will be welcome, and trust that no worldly success will make it otherwise, but that you will be uncorrupted by trade, nor suffer your disposition to be soured by care or over anxiety about the things of this world. Once more, J——s, let me remind you—you are embarked on a dangerous sea—hold fast the helm of wisdom—and after a prosperous voyage, may you come safe into port to enjoy the fruits of your enterprise! Adieu.

*Sandling, Hythe, Dec. 1810.*

W. C."

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#### ON THE PRAYER BOOK AND HOMILY SOCIETY.

*To the Editor of the Freethinking Christians' Magazine.*

SIR,

THEIR circular letters inform us, "that the Homilies abound in the genuine idioms and radices of the English tongue, and have contributed their aid to the English Bible and the Liturgy, in resisting injurious refinements, and in securing so much original nerve and purity to the English style." The "style" of the Homilies may be "original;" but when I read in the very first of them, such expressions as I cannot avoid laughing at, it is difficult to say as much of its "purity;" and, suppose an old edition of the Bible had made its appearance, with the eighth commandment thus—"thou shalt steal;" what would the "Homily Society" think of me, had I dared to introduce the "injurious refinement," of the adverb, "not?"

"The thirty-fifth article of our church (say they), affirms, that the Homilies contain a godly and wholesome doctrine, and necessary for these times." I either cannot believe this, Sir, or they contain so much "original purity of style," that I cannot understand its meaning. The first Homily, speaking of the Bible, says, "These books, therefore, ought to be much in our hands, in our eyes, in our ears, in our mouths." I rejoice, Sir, at every opportunity of having the Bible in my hand; and only lament my want of time for a more strict examination of its contents; but, as this book is intended to ex-

pand my faculties, I don't want to be blinded by it ! I have also an objection to having my ears stopped ; and, as paper does not constitute the general ordinary of human beings, I should not like to have it stuck in my mouth ; because I don't think it would be possible to eat it !

Again, " the wholesome doctrine which they inculcate is the substance of scriptural truth," &c. The first Homily says, " In these books we shall find the Father from whom, the Son by whom, and the Holy Ghost in whom, all things have their being, and keeping ; and these three persons to be but one God and one substance." This, Mr. Editor, is the first riddle ; and I dare say, when the Homilies are completed, they will form a pretty collection ! But that this quotation is " scriptural truth" I have the hardihood to deny—in the face of the Prayer Book and Homily Society—in the face of the world ! But farther, " It was mentioned by one clergyman at the meeting, that he had often read them to attentive congregations ; and, by another, that he was in the habit of reading them on saints' days, with such acceptance from his parishioners, that they frequently consulted their Almanacks for the return of a red-letter day, when they might again enjoy the gratification of hearing a Homily." These clergymen were too ignorant, or too idle, to compose their own sermons, or they would not have been content with reading the Homilies. The necessity for people to look for a red letter-day will soon be removed, as the Homilies are publishing in rapid succession, and then, they can read for themselves. When this time arrives, the clergymen in question will be of no use ; and as they seem very stupid men, it will be from the " sweat of their brow," and not from the strength of their intellect, that they must in future eat and drink. I propose a plan—let them be bound out as parish apprentices (they have been kept all along by the parish) and learn some good substantial trade, such as will afford them sufficient employment to earn the bread they eat. I am told this would be hard ! not at all ; if all men had bread who are willing to earn it, few indeed would starve !

" On the first publication of the Homilies (say they) a volume was deposited in every parish church, and was publicly offered to the general perusal of the people : most of the copies, thus placed in churches, have long since fallen into decay." Wonderful discovery ! Perhaps in 1712 not a vestige of these Homilies was to be seen in one church out of ten ; and in 1812 the Prayer Book and Homily Society have discovered that most of them have long since gone to pot ! The man who first found out this should be called " Oculist to the Prayer Book and Homily Society."

I remember seeing (some twelve years ago) in the parish



church where I was born, a large volume of Fox's Book of Martyrs "publicly offered to the general perusal of the people." The parsons (thinking no doubt, all men thieves but themselves) had it fastened by a strong chain to one of the pillars; but the little boys re-martyred the martyrs; for, before I came to London, they had run away with the greater part of the *pretty* pictures!

Once more, Sir, "It is one great wish of the present society to supply this defect: the volume, therefore, will be put to press, as soon as a sufficient number of names are received." Shocking! What! wait for names in a business so important? Solicit subscribers to place a book in a church, while the people are even "consulting their Almanacks, for the return of a red letter-day." "What pity 'tis, yet pity 'tis 'tis true!" Don't let the "people perish for lack of knowledge;" you have yet the means in your power; I will suggest it. I want no reward, not even the honour of being a member of the Prayer Book and Homily Society. Gather up, then, all the surplices and gowns belonging the church—carry them to the pawnbrokers, and pledge them for money to provide Homilies. "Oh!" says Mr. Two to One, they won't suit me—they are rotten, and only fit for tinder! Then take Two to One's advice, make tinder of them, and carry him the communion plate. "Oh! sacrilege!" no, no, this is no sacrilege; it is the keeping plate in the church that encourages sacrilege, and offers temptations to thieves. "Oh! blasphemy! The plate is necessary for the administration of the holy sacrament." I deny it!

"The population of the empire (say they) is very rapidly becoming a reading population; and, if they are not amply supplied with wholesome truth, too many are lying on the watch to poison them with pernicious errors." Now comes my speech.—"The population of the empire (generally speaking) will never become readers of the Homilies; and if they *are* "amply supplied with wholesome truth," all the efforts of the Prayer Book and Homily Society will never "poison them with pernicious errors."

Boucer, in his epistle from Strasburgh—Bishop Horsley, in his address to his clergy—and the Right Reverend Father in God my Lord Bishop of Lincoln—have all spoken in favour of the Homilies; and therefore, "the expediency, and even the necessity of again bringing these compositions into general notice are unquestionable!" Was Boucer, with all "Strasburgh in his belly," to tell me that three is all the same as one, and that one is undoubtedly three, I should laugh at him. Was Bishop Horsley to tell me that "unless I held the holy Catholic faith, I should perish," I would answer "then perish I

must, for I do not believe it;" and should the Bishop of Lincoln walk into my study with the Pope standing on one leg on the top of his perriwig, and say "we have power to pronounce unto you absolution and remission," I would, *sans ceremonie*, give them the lie!

Your's, &c.

Russel Court, Sept. 1812.

JOHN MOOR.

P. S. I intend in your next (with your permission) to offer some remarks on the extensive usefulness of a Tract Society on Freethinking Principles.

## EXTRACTS FROM A PORT-FOLIO.

### THE SOLDIER'S PARADE,

OH! what a beautiful shew of fine well formed men! How arrayed! How drawn up into lines and squares! What sensations and thoughts do they not produce in me, a humble thinking spectator—how many moments, hours—nay years of anxious concern, have they not cost their parents, under the blessing of Divine Providence, to bring them up to manhood! And for what? to be thus arrayed to destroy their fellow creatures; nay even their own fellow citizens! Is this perfect model, made after the image of God, created for no other purpose than to desolate the globe, and make it a prey for wild beasts? Is this the fruit of a boasted religion? Does it in any point follow the precepts laid down by Christ? Can any system of morals defend such principles—thus to array the beautifullest part of God's creation in all manner of dresses, and to foster prejudices to destroy each other, plunder villages, destroy cities, make widows and orphans? Is there any example for this in nature? Is this the pride and boast of reason? Was this image of God created for no other purpose, than to invent means and methods to destroy himself, and render himself and his fellow creatures miserable and unhappy in this world? Do we see, throughout all the system of nature, any animal abuse his power and superior wisdom equal to mortal man?—*Alpha*.

### ON WAR.

We are told that war is the just judgment of God for our sins. Oh, Heavens! what blasphemy! What idea can we have of God's justice and mercy by this assertion? Who makes war? Not the peaceful labourer, the industrious mechanic, the innocent ploughboy, or thoughtless youth under twenty years of age. But are not these folks plunged into its evil consequences, and lasting miseries, and their blood spilt in the cause, be it ever so just or wrong. Pray can the sins of the young artless ploughboy, of eighteen years, be any ways equal to the crafty, artful statesman of fifty years, the ambitious sycophants of a vile monarch? If God had any thing to do with wars—if he interfered with man's business, would not his justness be poured forth on the guilty. Alas! thoughtless mortal, consider well first whom you blame; "perceive the moat in thine own eye;" and remember there is a day of retribution for wars, when the secrets of all causes and hearts will be open to the view of this beneficent Being, who endowed man with free will; but at the same time gave him reason and conscience to discover good from evil. Pray, who employs the deceitful, recruiting serjeants? the merciless press warrants? who opens every avenue to distress, poverty, plunder, wretchedness, rapine, woes, and curses? Do the poor curse God for wars? No; but they always curse the pride of their evil, vicious, governors, who roll in luxuries on their children's blood.—*Alpha*.



## ORIGINAL POETRY.

**S**HOULD you be induced to insert the following lines in your Magazine, it may perhaps be proper to inform your readers, that they were originally suggested by a perusal of M. Pavillon's "Advice to a young Female on her Entrance into the World;" the latter part of them (after the line "Never with undue warmth," &c.) being little more than a free translation of certain of the stanzas of that poem.

Yours, &amp;c.

J. D.

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## ADMONITION;

*Addressed to a youthful Friend.*

BEFORE your youthful eyes, my friend, appears  
 A lengthen'd line of bliss-bestowing years;  
 Behold! the beams of Pleasure light your days,  
 And Fortune strews with flowers your peaceful ways.  
 But ah! beware!—list to a warning voice,  
 And pause before you make the awful choice.  
 Not in the madness of uncurb'd desires,  
 In Pleasure's whirlpools, or in Passion's fires,  
 Will bliss be found. Who would be happy long,  
 Must seek for joy 'mid Nature's peaceful throng:  
 Must learn from her their wild desires to rule,  
 And study virtue in Religion's school.  
 Then when the arduous race of life is run.  
 You'll find that innocence and peace are one.

Be just!—in every action, thought, or deed,  
 Let every sentence from your heart proceed.  
 Be faithful! from no secret duty swerve;  
 In serving others you yourself shall serve,  
 For friendly deeds to kind returns give birth,  
 Like dews that renovate their native earth.

Nor yet, my youthful friend, the calls despise  
 Of life's more humble, lesser charities.  
 Virtue's broad pencil sketches out the scene,  
 These are the pleasing tints that glow between—  
 The sun beams these that light the mental world,  
 Without them man were in a chaos hurl'd,  
 And he that scorns them, impotently great,  
 But sinks, not soars above the human state.  
 Let smiles then speak your uncorrupted truth,  
 For cheerfulness becomes the brow of youth;  
 'Tis Nature's garb—and all who own her fires,  
 Should prize the attributes her frame inspires;  
 Her's too the garb, whose blisses never cease,  
 Whose ways are pleasantness, and paths are peace,



Yet let not rude, unlicens'd, senseless mirth,  
 To endless scenes of trifling joy give birth,  
 And more beware, that no malicious sneer,  
 Nor biting scoff, contemptuously appear.  
 In speech, respect yourself! remember well,  
 Your mind is judg'd by what your maxims tell;  
 And, mocking others, ever seek the while,  
 That they themselves, as well as you, may smile.

In your discourse be open, mild, and clear,  
 In manners simple, and in mind sincere;  
 Your language chaste—let no pedantic pride  
 Your knowledge 'tempt to shew, or ignorance hide;  
 Candor, at least displays a noble mind,  
 While Ostentation is but Folly's blind.

Never with undue warmth disputes pursue,  
 Nor e'er conclude till either side you view;  
 And if (the fate of mortals!) you should err,  
 Let no false shame, let no mean pride, appear;  
 But boldly dare, e'en from your earliest youth,  
 To own your fault, and turn again to truth;  
 Nor fear to have the venial error known,  
 But follow virtue by whoever shewn.

Seek not with busy eyes each plot to see:  
 Who would know all things indiscreet must be,  
 Or rashly if the guilty tale's reveal'd,  
 In guarded silence let it lay conceal'd;  
 E'en that the man, whose tongue the words unfold,  
 Himself at times may doubt himself has told.

The man who idly flatters all his days,  
 And blindly spreads the incense of his praise:  
 Who bends obsequiously to all the croud,  
 Is humbly arrogant, and meanly proud,  
 To no true useful end of living lives,  
 Nor honor takes himself, nor honor gives.  
 Yet let not chilling pride inform your eye,  
 Nor mean contempt restrain the kind reply:  
 For others faults let no rude scorn be shewn,  
 And learn them, only to correct your own.

Those who by undeserv'd applause are bless'd,  
 Who own to virtues which they ne'er possess'd;  
 Who smile at flatt'ries, unwrought honors prize,  
 And stoop so low as by vile means to rise,  
 Are bubbles merely—by a breath who live—  
 Idols—whose only powers their votaries give.  
 Praise when deserv'd may true delight afford:  
 Who has not glow'd beneath th' approving word?  
 Tho' still the well-form'd mind, in virtue's cause,  
 Would merit, rather than receive applause;  
 True to itself would scorn the tribute given,  
 And claim its honors in its native heaven!

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#### ERRATUM.

In our last, page 373, for "were polytheists," read "were nor polytheists."